

order that we may live,—live a real life, and develop the powers and the affections, which have been bestowed upon us by a wiser Creator. It ought not to be, and will not be, that any who properly discharge their duties to society, should be condemned to constant and unvaried drudgery. To make life universally longer, and happier, and more useful, is a noble object to aim at, and it is, moreover, so practicable, that every one who earnestly and wisely tries to do this may feel perfectly certain that he will to a certain extent succeed. Thousands condemn themselves to unnecessary illness, days without enjoyment, and premature death. If we can make these sensible of their obligations to others and to themselves, make them understand and believe the laws which regulate the human economy, and convince them that there are advantages to be had which would be cheaply purchased even by a "twopenny rate" (dirt cheap, some would say, but we happen to know how dear dirt is), a great step forward will have been made.

CHRISTIAN ART.—THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN.

ALL students of iconography must feel indebted to Mr. Hendrie, for his able and lucid correction of the strange mistake that prevailed with regard to the name of the *Marillo*, lately in Marshal Soult's collection. It might naturally have been supposed that his communication would have enlightened the public mind, and have set the matter at rest for ever. Such, however, seems not to have been the case, for your correspondent, "J. F. C." comes boldly forward as the champion of the misnomer, and demands further facts. His letter bears a fallacy on the face of it. Unless your readers can be induced to accept his somewhat hasty and illogical conclusion, that "The Conception of the Virgin" is a contraction of "Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception," unless they will adopt the opinion that the terms, "Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception," and "The Immaculate Conception of Our Lady" mean the same thing, and may be applied indiscriminately to the same picture, they will still believe that there is some meaning in words, and that St. Anne, and not the Virgin, must be the person who figures chiefly in a representation of "The Conception of the Virgin." *Marillo* painted twenty-five pictures of "Our Lady;" therefore they were not pictures of "The Conception of Our Lady;" but it is quite possible that many a one of these may have been termed "The Conception," under the idea that it had reference to the passage, "Spiritus Sanctus superveniet tibi, et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi." Hence, *Marillo* may have obtained his distinctive title.

All iconologists are aware that the description given of the *Marillo* in question, is an accurate one of the conventional Assumption which they so frequently meet with in the works of the middle ages; and they should know that the extract given from the *Mount Athos MS.* is an exact specification of the orthodox mode of depicting "The Conception of the Blessed Virgin," as practised by Father Joseph and his contemporaries, his predecessors, and their contemporaries, in the east and in the west, from the earliest times of iconographic art.

As no doubt many amongst us would willingly behold in these representations of the Assumption something beyond the traditional meaning attached to them by the Church of Rome, I venture to add for their use a few of the interpretations of which these really beautiful objects are capable, according to the authority of various divines.

"*Mulier sole amicta.*" "The Church clad with the rays of the Sun of Righteousness."

It is generally rendered by radiations surrounding the body of the Virgin taking the external form of the vesica. We find it, amongst other numerous examples, in an exquisite little

boon in the gleaning of the centre arch of the rood-screen, York Minster.

"*Lena sub pedibus ejus.*"

This may mean—

1. The Mosaic dispensation, the chief festivals of which took place at lunar periods, at Noviluna Pascha Pentecoste; Festa Tabernaculorum: "He appointed the moon for certain seasons."—Ps. civ. 19. Or,

2. The minor light of the Law and the Prophets subordinate to the light of the Gospel. Or,

3. The light of Truth and Scripture: "Thy word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my path."—Ps. cxix. 105. Or,

4. The Worship of Satan and his Angels (symbolised by "the Power of Darkness") trampled under foot.

"Et in capite ejus coronas stellarum duodecim."

What but "the Twelve," the Holy Apostles? We often find a figure of our Saviour seated on one throne beside that of the Virgin on another, in the act of crowning her, as in the north porch of St. Jacques, Liege, in allusion to the lines in the Romish office,—"Maria Virgo assumpta est ad ethereum thalamum, in quo Rex Regum stellato sedet solis;" but they may be called, for distinction's sake, "The Coronation of the Virgin." R. P. PULLAN.

The study of iconology possesses a lively interest apart from the attraction which it offers as a matter of taste, but it has been treated by many with a carelessness inconsistent with the importance due to the pictorial history of Christian faith, or of fluctuating dogmas or legend. It is valuable as a means of ascertaining, by "writings" on the wall, various phases of theological history, as of marking the rise and progress of certain heresies and superstitions which have been intruded at particular periods. The science would be stripped of all utility were not careful and dispassionate watch instituted over the errors, which design on the one hand and ignorance and carelessness on the other may have allowed to creep in, so that they may be eradicated as soon as seen, otherwise confusion is soon made, error flourishes, and, like a baneful weed, so scatters its seed around, that an attempt to return to a prior state of simplicity, even as regards a legendary and unimportant superstition, becomes characterised as a "bold departure" from established custom. That which must give pictorial Christian art a permanent and peculiar interest, is the fact that, at an early period, the dogmas of the Roman Church have been attacked through it, and this also has taken place at various periods of their progress. Christian art is nothing less than theology figured. The person charged by the Archbishop of Paris to review the proofs of Mons. Didron's "*Iconographie de Dieu*," attached but a slight importance to the figures which M. Didron sought to explain; "but," writes that gentleman, "he perceived, when it was too late, that iconography was nothing less than theology translated by figures, and that the work of an antiquary merited an attention as serious as that of the book of any other writer." The ecclesiastic found, in some cases, that it formed a weapon rather than a plaything. An anxiety to correct one of these heresies caused me to address you a short time ago. I was desirous to recal to view the proper subject intended to be illustrated by means of the personification of the mysterious woman of the Apocalypse of John, in established use from a very early period in the portrayal of the assumption of the Virgin; for the Greeks, always prone to symbol, immediately seized upon and applied to the Virgin all the attributes which distinguished this figure. My desire was to restore this design to its prior and (pictorially considered) legitimate use, that of the "Assumption" of Mary, and to show how the "Conception of the Virgin" had always been portrayed; yet your correspondent "T. F. C." (p. 596) ventures to characterise this as a "bold departure from established custom." "T. F. C." also calls upon me for a consecutive arrange-

ment of a series of pictures representing the history of the Virgin, with the "Conception" placed at the commencement, and presupposes that an extract from the *Athos Manuscript*, given in my communication to you, is quoted from memory. Setting aside *Marillo* for the present, I have now lying before me various designs, dating from the time of Giotto to that of Guido, in which, although ordinarily faithful enough to the text, the Italian artists have yet recognised this symbolism, in many instances the symbolic application is entirely left to the observer, as may be seen in the "Assumption," by Pontius, engraved for the *Museo Prætorie*. In the Catalogue of the Collection of Charles the First (p. 126), a picture is given of the school of Raphael; it came from Mantua, and represents the Assumption. The Virgin is in the clouds, accompanied by four angels. St. John is kneeling on the earth below, stretching forth his hands upwards, and thus identifying the subject. In an Assumption by Guido, it is again the mysterious woman of St. John, surrounded by angels, the moon under her feet, with a corona of twelve stars, the aureole surrounding the body, which is clothed in the usual blue and white mantle. There is a picture by Capanne, a pupil of Giotto, representing the entombment, or rather assumption. The Virgin carries Christ in her arms; is surrounded by angels above, with saints below; the moon under her feet. Two angels envelop her in a mantle of honour: Eastern taste here betrays itself. In fact, these pictures swarm, and there is no difficulty here in appealing to established custom. But although it would perhaps not be difficult to find such a consecutive arrangement as your correspondent wishes (and with a little more leisure I may be able to satisfy him), such a series would no more advance my position than does its absence injure it. I have afforded "T. F. C." a more conclusive authority than one, or even half-dozen, such series; namely, an extract from one of those ancient manuals, and the most complete, which not only formed the guide, but also the directions, to the Christian painter, in which the subjects are arranged "according to the order of their anniversaries (or rather feasts)." "The Feasts of the Mother of God" (it was at the third general council, that of Ephesus, that Mary was declared, A.D. 431, the Mother of God) stand in the order I have given in my communication to you (p. 502), and in which they are to be delineated, with directions for portrayal: the series commences with the "Conception of the Virgin," and although I stridged in making the extract, which is the reason why "inverted commas" were not used, I did not quote from memory. The Assumption was, however, also treated by the Greek Church, by representing the incredulity of Thomas, who, wanting faith in the resurrection of Christ, is portrayed also as an unbeliever, in this instance; to him the Virgin casts her girdle, which he receives in token of the truth.

One point only remains to be noticed in the letter of your correspondent. He says, "We should bear in mind that the term 'Conception of the Virgin,' is a contraction of the full title, viz. 'Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception;'" a singular argument, which would make contraction no less than a transposition, and therefore other—very other—than contraction: the word "conception" has, in all languages, a passive sense: the conception of Christ was figured by the annunciation to the Virgin, and is the first of the series in the history of the Saviour: so in the conception of the Virgin the first in the history of Mary, and is marked by the annunciation to Anna. Of an early period in the iconography of the Western Church, during the teaching and influence of the Greek school, there are several "Conceptions of the Virgin," some of which have been confounded with the "Annunciation," or the conception of Christ. Gabriel is present in both instances, but I have remarked the spirit descending in the latter only: no logical mind can therefore accept this "contraction," proposed by "T. F. C." as "the true interpretation of the title of 'Conception of the Virgin.'" Mr. Stirling, in his work, very properly